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RECEIVED**Transcript of comments from****Samuel Elton Jones'**

JAN - 7 2003

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary**Regarding TRS (Telecommunications Relay Service)
and VRS (Video Relay Service)**

Throughout this document:

[brackets] indicate transcriber comments or notations added to clarify meaning

{curly brackets} indicate uncertain translations

{curly brackets with italicized type} indicate unintelligible passages; text represents
English glosses of signs seen

My name is Samuel Elton Jones. I live in Silver Spring, MD. I checked the FCC web site and found that the deadline for comments is May 10, 2002. I decided that submitting my comments in ASL on videotape would be more expressive and fluent than trying to put it in writing. This will work smoothly if someone will interpret my comments into written English to have it be equivalent to others in the written history of complaints.

To summarize, after the passing of ADA, the TRS requirement was met in all 50 states. I have had many experiences with TRS – like last week on May 3 [May 3 was the date of FCC's TRS Forum]. Today I'd like express myself more clearly on certain points as a follow-up.

I have a professional job with many co-workers. Basically, I have a prob... After 1991 when MD Relay opened for service for the first time in history... After that, there were a few problems, but overall, things were better.

Dec. 1, 1991 is important because my mother – I have deaf parents – who had never used it before, was now using the TTY for the first time ever. I was very excited and emotional.

It was the first time I communicated with my supervisor. I taught both him and his supervisor, so both of them knew sign. My supervisor didn't know very much about relay service. He really had no clear idea about it until Monday morning. I was thrilled and excited to surprise him with the use of the service. I really remember that day.

On Dec. 1st, I remember that at midnight, we called to order a pizza for a bowling league that ran into Monday morning. That night was the first time we could get together and do that. I remember that well.

¹ Comments were submitted in sign language on videotape. The videotape was hand delivered to the FCC on Wednesday, June 5, 2002.

When I started contacting people by TTY, I called my supervisor through relay. He's in a room down the hall from me. After talking with him, I waited for his reaction. Would he be surprised? Happy? What? He used to say "Can't" all the time. "Things can't change." But here was "can't" undo[ne]; here was change. I wanted to see his response. When he came down the hall, I saw his face. I was all smiles thinking it would be good news for him. Instead, his face was stormy and he fingerspelled 4 letters, "You A-B-U-S-E."

I was so embarrassed! Everything got turned around and was 100% opposite of my intent. I was so confused and didn't understand at all. The good thing was that it seems my supervisor's supervisor heard about it. She met with him and explained the relay service. That cleared it up and things were fine, but I was puzzled about why he said, "Abuse" to me. I still didn't understand it very well. I didn't understand why for a long time. That was in '91.

For over 10 years after that, I can remember a total of maybe 10 calls from co-workers to me, but I made lots of calls to other people. Before the relay opened, you had to wait maybe 15 minutes before you could get the volunteer services.

Now that we have e-mail, it's much better. As e-mail use has increased, the use of relay has decreased. Then **AIM** appeared, AOL's IM, Instant Messaging system; but people don't often contact me that way.

That's probably due to the difference between hearing and deaf cultures. I'll try to explain the difference, but it's hard. Basically, you have to remember that with TTYs there's no way to monitor people. Hearing people can get a sense of the emotions of others through sound, and in that way determine if they are on the right track.

I applaud the relay service for informing us of background noises and conveying the "feeling" in a person's voice. I feel that's very important and appreciate it very much. There's no way you can measure it, but if we continue working together on it, it will eventually come along.

As for Maryland Relay, the Maryland State Government and Sprint have proposed VRI or VRS in accordance with FCC requirements. They offered free long distance calls for 6 months. I went and used it a number of times. Of course, it's a new technology, a new INDSN [ISDN?], through several offices in various locations.

Of course we knew nothing about the occasional blackouts when we couldn't get through to the network. {We tried to figure out the key to dial-in to get through to the TV and the c-phone but there was no connection.}

I used to talk with my daughter a lot. The first 6 months were frustrating but it improved as I learned the technology that went with VRI service in the Austin, Texas area. The people there tried to learn how to understand my signing style. Just like accents, the signs are different in Maryland than in Texas. They all tried their best; I compliment them on that. But this was one crucial thing they missed that ran throughout.

After the first 6 months, Sprint and the state of Maryland agreed to extend the program an additional 3 months because of some very natural problems due to the newness of the technology. Since then, things have improved. The 3 month extension was to provide additional time to encourage more people to use the service in its various locations.

On the last day, because the offices were closed for the night, I had to drive to Hagarstown, MD. I went to Deafnet which is where the deaf community gathers. {I went to meet that.}

Before that, I noticed in talking with my daughter, Ruth, that their children were more interested in using sign than in using the TTY. It's a natural process instead of needing to convert typed text into spoken English to be able to talk with someone.

One day when I was using VRI in Texas, I was chatting and started using very strong [idiomatic] ASL. I noticed the interpreter got worn out and had to quit and take a break. The other interpreter took over from then on. I was a little surprised. It was the first time the interpreters couldn't keep up. The others were fine.

Also I went to a deaf study in Oakland. Some people saw that I was from Texas and said, "What's wrong with you guys?" Some of the people complained that VRI services were stealing some interpreters away from people in Austin who needed interpreting services, because the interpreters were taking on-going, full time positions with VRI now. That surprised me.

So back to the present. I discovered that the 30 deaf employees at the IRS have agreed that they would much rather have 3-D VRWRS, that is, holography, like in Star Wars, where you can see the depth in signs -- perhaps using red hands or other dark color that will show up clearly. The body could be smaller since it's the hands, face, and facial expressions that are most important. I don't know if technical solutions will be possible, but I heard at the TRS [Forum] at the FCC on May 3, that the technology has been resolved.

Looking at that...I wonder about using 2 cameras...having 2 cameras going in ...I'm very curious about that. I'm waiting for that. I hope we continue until we're able to use that.

But to...I'm almost at the close. But before that, there's one crucial incident. I'll never forget that moment -- that day I went to VRI. I called the secretary at a company. We were connected. I gave them Bryan's name. They asked if I want to page him. I was about to sign, "Yes," as I normally would, but thank God, I changed my mind to be professional and nice. I decided to spell, "Y-E-S."

As I was spelling, y-e-s, before I even got to the last "s," just as I was nearing the "s," the secretary took off; she was gone! Wow! That person was fast! Off like a shot before I had even finished spelling Y-E-S. Before, there was no way for me to understand the timing of live [telephone] conversations until I saw it in action -- seeing the way she took off like that -- I was puzzled. It led me to identify that incident in the past -- oh, you may recall, back in about 1991, when my supervisor told me, "You a-b-u-s-e," and I was so baffled and I didn't understand why.

Now, in looking at my VRI experience, I understand that's how professionals deal with the phone. They're always in a rush, working, serious, wanting things completed with 100% precision – a zero tolerance for errors. That's something I didn't know about. When I surprised him [my supervisor], it interrupted his work. That's why he said, **“You a-b-u-s-e.”** I didn't understand why until VRI came into being. That's how I came to understand and become aware that I needed to watch it. Now I see. It helped me look back at other experiences in the past that continues the separation between deaf and hearing people.

I also look back on information from Dr. Tom Holcomb in a new videotape about the differences between deaf and hearing people. I went to hear his presentation on The Deaf Way and The Hearing Way. He gave us good examples of assumptions but didn't make a point about time. I hope he adds it to the videotape in order to caution all deaf people about paying attention to time. And to be prepared to deal with the type **of** person who works faster than ever, faster than, say, back in the 1980's, 20 years ago. Now with new technology like cell phones... I see many people out and about using cell phones; they're always talking on the phone. But we who are deaf, have none. That's not right. That puts us at a disadvantage – out **of** synch. I've noticed an increased push for racing along at 10omph.

I remember my school for the deaf – I have to say, I grew up with a strong deaf background since my parents are both deaf.

I've also had problems with e-mail. I use the Unix program, Mailx. It has a manual input and output with a black and white display, no graphics. A single screen is limited to a 20 line block, incrementing by 20 each time a new screen is displayed – the first screen would be up to line 20, the next: 40, the next: 60, the next: 80, etc. – mode 20. I decided to convert the format – to reverse it so that each screen would end with line 1 and zero would indicate the end of the screen block. When I saw a new *n*, I was responsible for reading the information – maybe from my supervisor or whoever. Mailx had a bug in it that I didn't know about until I discovered it later. Each screen had a maximum of 20 lines, so the first screen would be up to 20, the next screen: 40. One time, my supervisor sent me an e-mail that happened to be the 41st that I received. The display stopped at 40. There was no warning that another e-mail was on the next screen, so I thought I was seeing all the e-mails I had. It wasn't until I deleted some of the other e-mails that I finally saw the one from my supervisor. I thought it had just arrived but it had actually arrived earlier. I didn't notice it soon enough *so* it got pushed off the screen and didn't reappear until I deleted one of the other e-mails.

That caused my supervisor to get really angry. I didn't know it until he came to my office. He came up to me and made a very strong comment, trying to get through to me. He said, “Do you think the company pays me to meet with you?” At that moment, it occurred to me that he was right. I had never thought about the company paying him to come see me. That caused me to think **of** something I call the “Two Ways.” There's the way of deaf people who grew up in residential schools for the deaf, with deaf parents, socializing with deaf people. It's totally automatic, it's the way I grew up, the feeling I developed inside that can be expressed in 4-letters, W-A-I-T. **You** can't see it; it's something internal. Because you can't hear, naturally, other people always have to dash around to meet you face-to-face to be able to interact.

Gallaudet University and schools for the deaf are tops in that kind of face-to-face interaction. Dr. Tom Holcomb calls it inoree [unrecognized fingerspelled word] to share information. I'm wondering if that spills over into the habits we develop to wait for other people to come to us. Today I still have communication problems.

{I've heard that if people are always waiting for each other, communication stalls. That's the trouble. That's how I see the conflict. I call my approach to the conflict, Hearing Way One. People know how to "sell" to someone, to go out to meet them, but they never think of someone coming to them. There are 2 parts to the problem – to reduce by $\frac{1}{4}$, $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ and to increase by the same amount – to increase access to supervisors in companies that have policies about deaf employees. It's worth a little increase. That's all it is, a simple increase, nothing drastic. I will... I understand that change isn't easy, that it's not easy to decrease, but we should try.}

And now, speeds of 100 mph are possible. I do believe that. The last straw of all is that **ASL** can match the speed of spoken language at 1860 [possibly 180-1601 words per minute. I believe that we can do that through VRI **or** VRS, whichever is better. I want to impress on all of you that the equivalent to normal interactions can happen through interpreters. I believe it can happen. But the technology isn't ready yet.

That leads me to say that like DPN, Deaf President Now, it's VRS Now.

Last fall, I asked for a VRS connection and was eager to use it. But the timing was wrong. Our HQ was moving to a new building and to a new technology, Windows 2000. So I had to be patient and wait for the right time. I just have to wait for that.

At the same time, or before that... there were problems with 711. In February 2001, there was a new EB [?], but many PBX systems were having problems. Some were not ready yet; they didn't work. Some could run on the old systems fine, but the new ones that used computerized systems didn't work so well. It really varied. You had to contact the staff, the technical staff, to re-program them, to fix them all over the place. Some worked. Some at last were ready. The goal was to have them all ready. {After the move then we would try different [sign with unclear meaning].} The reason was to help the people at work to use VRI/VRS to call me – at work, there is only 1 TTY for **our** entire group. That would help me meet other hidden deaf employees and be able to interact and share, to give mutual feedback {on how to deal with things.}

Other things... another concern – 19 or 20 years ago, there were many large companies whose employees were all staff. Now, it's changed. There are more contracts. More and more outsourcing is being used – because it's cheaper – maybe they want to avoid complying with **ADA**. Seems to me, FCC is staying away – so that's what I'm wondering.

Soon after the **ADA** was passed in 1990, I noticed some changes, but no increase in salary. {It tortured me. I had to be so careful, so defensive. So many things happened that made me defensive, not like in other companies that were more aggressive. I didn't know until I lost my job last year. I was laid off because of my on-going habit from deaf culture, of w-a-i-t, of

waiting for VRS/VRI. But it was too late. I lost the battle to keep that last one, I see that clearly.}

{But before that, regarding the problem with contracts – I sent an e-mail to one of the new contractors – there are many contractors at headquarters – and asked “Who are you?” Of course, as a contractor, his concern was that time is money. His response was, pay up. I said, tell that to the supervisor. I wondered how that e-mail, that tiny spark could have erupted that way. Now I know why. It’s that 100 mph speed that blows things up. Someone scolded me and said that what I did was illegal, that I shouldn’t do that. I was puzzled, and wondered about that. Afterwards, when I got home, I thought about it and checked the phone directory and found that the person’s name was not there. That meant that the person was in B-B [Baltimore?] as a contractor. Therefore the rule says not to talk to him any more.}

I met with my supervisor who met with his supervisor and worked things out.

{That’s how I see being careful – now, a good example is the social work office where they decided to do away with tty’s and have open office hours with no appointments necessary. It was a mistake, they had masses of people coming in and out. They found that people were afraid to write English, so have been trying to avoid that. Maybe they don’t want to synchronize a gap of time from work, I don’t know. Right now I’m uncertain. Deaf Way II, takes place this summer. I’m looking forward to it and to meeting ta comettailion [perhaps a company name? or peson’s name?] *{veryfast explain how catch up long-ago e-mailfor phone. But nowfor hearing, but off-the-point deaf; off-the-point hearing, proceedfar-out.}*

We’ve caught up as far as the TTY, but now with the world moving at 100 mph, we have a lot more catching up to do. {The problem we, deaf people face and worry about is that perhaps we have to do it on our own, that the only option left is to set-up our own businesses, maybe to work on contracts.}

Back to that last day when I went to meet with that deaf businessman. He really needs VRI services badly. “VRI would really help us to sell to our customers,” he said.

{Another relay service nearby in Baltimore with different voices. But happen in VRI. But different race. But use more close with communication rapid process. Snag me.} We need VRI, We know that. We can’t wait for that. It’ll help business.

One final issue of interest is about 711 – there’s a problem with publicity. People who are handicapped as well as various organizations all have phone numbers that take one line. But I who have a business, must pay for two lines and ask for one line that reads 711 (301) etc. Hearing people skip over the 711 and start dialing the 301 etc. – ignoring the 711 entirely. I think I would tell them to go back to the 800 number as the TRS toll [sic] number that can be used on a business card. Maybe that’d be best for awhile. We look forward to that.

{He told me that he asked an advertiser to waive the cost of the second line. But the advertiser refused. He told me, “There’s only one MD Relay Service; I don’t use any others. I’m only one

person; it's hard on me if you don't waive the cost of a second line." I hope we add an approach to business advertising costs that allows phone numbers to be consolidated into one line. }

How can we set up a way to help hearing people dial in to connect with 711? Perhaps putting the 711 at the end of the phone number or working out something that would help businesses along.

The last interesting thing has to do with a man who came up to me. He was from Texas, from the same area where I grew up. He said that QVRI Services in Texas was trying to learn Maryland signs because they felt they were missing important signed information. For example, in Texas the word, "tire," [i.e., car tire] is signed with the handshape used for hitchhiking. The hand is held with the bottom of the wrist facing forward and the extended thumb poking a puffed out cheek. I used that sign while I was going up. In Maryland, the sign is made with a bent forefinger brushed on the bottom of the chin. It was a surprise to me that the styles are so different. I agree with him 100% and have no problem at all supporting him in his efforts. He's right. I hope that VRI Services in our state can learn the styles used in different areas to communicate with their businesses better.

I hope the FCC works on experimenting with the placement of 711 – both in front of or after the phone number itself – or keeping the 800 number, or using VRI in parenthesis followed by the phone number, or just sticking with the old VRI number for awhile.

Going back to my attempt to contact my supervisor's supervisor to request VRI services – there was no response for a couple months and I began to wonder. At the same time, there was a 1 week workshop being offered. I decided to participate without an interpreter. I realized this was an opportunity to monitor the actions of my co-workers. I actually joined the class on Wednesday, so I watched them all day Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Friday, I waited to see what would happen when the class was over. When class was dismissed, all the hearing employees ran off in different directions taking care of different things they had to do, leaving me there to realize that my habit was just the opposite – to wait until Monday. I saw that time was valuable – that it was the reason behind cell phones and computers, that time is money. Labor costs are up and there's increased pressure to move things along.

{I'm one deaf person surrounded by hearing people. My brother-in-law [uncertain whether the brother-in-law is from Canada or is in the military] shared a few things with me that left me speechless. He agreed with everything I said; he supported me and felt that what I said was right. From that conversation onward, I learned that when I have plenty of time, I can move along at my own pace. If work is given to me, I inspect it, pass it back to confirm it's correct and then accept the next piece of work, do it, pass it back, etc. I've discovered the concept of "Do it right. Do it once." I'd never thought of that. If I'd known, I'd have been more careful, I'd have called and kept in touch with outside vendors to make sure that information was clearly exchanged, to get the job done right. }

Other people rush to get things over with, do a bare minimum of work and then sweep things under the rug, calling it "good enough." I take more time to complete things carefully, to do

good quality work. But now I have to change, to adapt to the need for speed. {I have to be aware of the need to hurry and the opportunity for service.}

{I hope FCC will support us and help us teach people, to warn them to identify their workers who are fast and those who need more time.}

I'm thankful for the '99 start of IM, installing IM messaging, AOL AIM, that helped me a lot with vendors and companies working with me to resolve technical issues with the database, etc. That was valuable.

I also had a problem with Windows Chat. I asked my supervisor if I could install it on the LAN network immediately so that everyone in the system could chat with me. I waited and waited but it never happened. When I went to NAD in 1998, I told them about my problem. I discovered that the security issues involved are more powerful than the ADA. I was stuck. It seems that in order to pass the ADA they took out some parts. It's time they amended the law. It's time that companies also amend their policies about deaf people, to basically help encourage deaf employees to get rid of that internal feeling of "W-A-I-T." {I will use VRI companies more and be more aware of time and be better prepared to deal with all the interactions and transactions that depend on fast responses every day.}

But it's too late. I've tried to reduce my sense of "W-A-I-T" somewhat, but only a bit. Next time, we need to get VRI immediately and not wait anymore. It costs me to wait.

I think there's something new called Breakneck. Its meaning has to do with.... there was... I remember that NBC channel 4 had a story about a deaf couple in Michigan who lost their baby to adoption because the state or local government with the step-mother, agreed to go in and remove the baby from its parents. I saw the parents' faces; it was clear they did not expect it and were startled. {I saw the sign, "give-up." It was slow, of course, but they never thought about timing. As I was watching, I wondered if it was the same as when I went to another company and approached a woman who was sitting at a desk. I wrote a note and showed it to her. She read it and, of course, tried to talk to me. She talked a bit and then took off at breakneck speed and there I was racing after her, following her, trying to catch up. It was nothing serious, but I went in with her and found that I had made a mistake. I was deep in a deaf dhardard [sic]. That's when you've made a mistake you can't fix, when it's too late and the effect has already begun to spread and you can't stop it.}

I remember the FCC policy about time that all relay operators have to follow. *{Have control time all time right that why opposite. Maybe look at that to progress zoom have breakneck.}*

Looking back, I wish I had stopped that woman – just reached out and grabbed her and verified what she was planning to do and say. I gave up control, and off she went at breakneck speed.

My last comment of all – well, one more before that.....[tape ends]

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